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ABSTRACT

This report presents a concise and useful overview of the issue of business/education partnerships to develop and implement workplace literacy programs. The first chapter focuses on the challenges of developing a literate work force for Florida. It considers the changing workplace and work force, Florida trends in illiteracy, the impact of illiteracy, and literacy partnerships as a solution. The next chapter discusses a number of approaches that have been used successfully and stresses the role business/education partnerships can play in creating effective, financially feasible programs. It outlines five types of literacy programs and lists key concepts to keep in mind when creating a program and 11 steps for creating a program. The following chapter describes 10 Florida basic skills-building programs--all of them involving business and most of them partnerships with a public-sector organization such as a local school system or community college. Individual employers are as follows: Becker Holding Corporation; Bee Gee Shrimp Inc.; Frito-Lay Inc.; Gadsen County Chamber of Commerce; Johnson & Johnson Medical Inc.; Mid-Florida Mining Industries, Inc.; Motorola Inc.; Palm Beach Post; Tropicana Products, Inc.; and Vanity Fair Mills. A contact person and telephone number are provided for each employer. Florida and national resource organizations are listed. Addresses, telephone number and description of service(s) are provided. (YLB)

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SHOWCASE 3

Workplace Literacy:

Bottom-Line

Business

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SHOWCASE 3

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Preface

When President Bush and the nation's 50 governors unveiled their six national education goals last year, one of the most ambitious declared that, by the year 2000, "Every adult must be a skilled, literate worker and citizen, able to compete in a global economy."

Striving to meet that goal is vital to our nation's future and to the standard of living of each and every American. But it is also a bottom-line business issue. Building and keeping a qualified workforce is *the* most important business issue of the decade, according to 62% of the corporate chairmen polled in 1990 by Heidrick & Struggles, a management recruiting firm.

Anyone who's been in business knows that a company's workers are its greatest asset. Without productive, adequately skilled people to operate and maintain a company's physical plant, capital investment means nothing. In the service industry, productive, adequately skilled people are even more important — they literally *are* the "physical plant."

And anyone who's been in business knows that getting productive, adequately skilled workers has been getting harder and harder. A number of factors contribute to this problem — as this Showcase report explains — but only one solution is at hand: Florida's employers must establish effective workplace literacy programs to upgrade the skills of our workforce.

For some time there has been a stalemate over the workplace literacy problem. Business people tend to see it as a problem caused by inadequate schools and therefore as a problem educators should solve. Educators tend to look at the ages of the workers involved and the difficulty of pulling back into the classroom people who are already frustrated and feeling "failed" by schools and

therefore view the problem as one business should solve. After all, educators tend to reason rightly, business will benefit greatly when workers' skills improve.

The fact is that we can no longer sit back and wait for "somebody else" to do something about the workplace literacy problem. We *all* have to get involved. Florida needs to build a value-added leadership economy second to none. To do that, we need a skilled workforce second to none. Our competitors — here in the United States and overseas — understand that principle and are acting on it. We can't afford to lag behind.

The ultimate solution to workplace literacy problems lies largely in our public school system. That's why the Florida Chamber of Commerce has worked so hard for so long toward the restructuring of education in this state. But four out of every five of the workers who will be on the job when the year 2000 dawns are already *out of school.* Fixing our schools today does mean fewer people with weak basic skills in the workforce tomorrow. But without adult workplace literacy programs — today — this solution will be too little, too late for too few.

The business/education partnerships profiled in this Showcase report make for heartening reading. Not only is it possible for Florida employers to set up workplace literacy programs, but it is also possible — with the help of education partners — to make them effective and financially feasible. As always with reports in the Chamber's Showcase series, this publication presents a concise and, we hope, a *useful* overview of a cutting-edge business issue.

Florida Chamber OF COMMERCE 1916•1991

Celebrating

75 Years

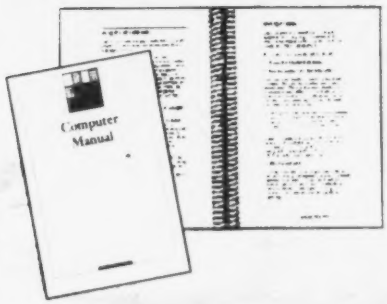
of Taking Care

of Business

Although this Showcase concentrates on how we can ensure that every Florida worker can read, write and do *basic* computations, it's only the first step. Approximately 90% of all scientific knowledge has been generated in just the last 30 years, according to the U.S. Commerce Department. This explosion of knowledge is dramatically changing how everyone does business. In the next 10 to 15 years, this pool of knowledge will double again. As a result, we *all* must become lifelong learners. We *all* must accept the challenge of training and retraining throughout our careers. Workplace literacy programs are a good first step toward taking up that challenge. By helping those among us who must struggle the hardest to be productive citizens, we can begin to understand that learning will never again be "kid's stuff" in Florida — or in America.

Glenda E. Hood

Glenda Hood
Chairman
Florida Chamber of Commerce



The Challenge: A Literate Workforce for Florida

A century ago, Americans were considered literate if they could merely sign their names. By the end of World War II, reading at the 4th-grade level was the benchmark for literacy. During the 1960s, it was reading at the 8th-grade level.

"It's not that people are becoming less literate," Irwin Kirsch, a senior research psychologist for the Educational Testing Services in Princeton, NJ, has said. "It's that we keep raising the standard."

Driving this trend has been the ever-growing sophistication of the work Americans do. Two centuries ago, when the United States took its first 10-year census, not more than 10% of American jobs required reading and writing abilities. Today, only 4% of new jobs can be filled by individuals with lowest-level skills.

With tomorrow's jobs promising to be even more demanding, can American workers meet the challenge? According to a 1990 Conference Board study, up to one-third of today's workers will be unable to perform tomorrow's work tasks.

Just how bad is the workplace illiteracy problem? Estimates run as high as half and as low as one-fifth of the working population, according to the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment. The National Assessment of Educational Progress's test of the literacy skills of young adults raises alarming questions. It revealed that *three out of five* 20-year-old Americans could not get from point A to point B on a map — so how could they work as delivery people or truck drivers? Nor could they add up their bill after lunch or determine if they were given the right change — so how could they tally an invoice at the office or make correct change as a cashier? And while three out of five *could* read the lead article in a newspaper, they could *not* reiterate its salient points — so how could they learn to operate machinery by reading a manual?

Four of every five of those who will be earning their living in the year 2000 are already beyond high school age.

Within their ranks are an estimated 15 million to 20 million "functional illiterates" — adults with basic skills only at the 8th-grade level or below. Another 1 million functional illiterates join the workforce each year. For these millions, restructuring the schools is no solution. Something more is needed.

The Changing Workplace

In the past, Americans with limited academic achievements could succeed in the workplace. Jobs often required going through the motions of a regularized process or repetitive use of a piece of equipment. Because the emphasis was on doing and not on thinking or communicating, poor reading, writing and math skills could be hidden or ignored.

WORK: YESTERDAY AND TOMORROW

	Yesterday	Tomorrow
Strategy	Mass production Long production runs Centralized control	Flexible production Customized production Decentralized control
Production	Fixed automation End-of-line quality control Fragmentation of tasks Authority vested in supervisor	Flexible automation On-line quality control Work teams, multi-skilled workers Authority delegated to worker
Hiring and Human Resources	Labor-management confrontation Minimal qualifications accepted Workers seen as a cost	Labor-management cooperation Screening for basic skills abilities Workforce seen as an investment
Job Ladders	Internal labor market Advancement by seniority	Limited internal labor market Advancement by certified skills
Training	Minimal for production workers Specialized for craft workers	Sessions for everyone Broader skills

Source: Adapted from What Work Requires of Schools, *U.S. Labor Dept.*

But year by year, the American workplace has been changing. A delivery job, for instance, was once a low-skill occupation. However, to work for Federal Express today, a delivery person must be able to run a computerized tracking system. Studies in Wisconsin and Indiana have shown that today's blue-collar workers read 97 minutes a day on the job — only a minute less than high school students spend reading in school and doing homework. Retail and clerical service workers read close to three hours a day on the job — about the same amount as professional workers. And workers are reading at a relatively high level of difficulty. Research done at Indiana University has found that some 70% of the reading material in a cross section of jobs nationally is now between 9th-grade and 12th-grade difficulty; another 15% is even higher.

For American workers, there will be no turning back and no standing still. Low-skill, low-wage jobs are being shifted to the workforces in many developing countries. To compete in a marketplace that has become truly global and exceedingly competitive, American workers must square off against some of the best-trained workers the world has ever seen in nations like Japan and Germany. To hang on to the high and ever-increasing standard of living Americans have come to expect in this century, the U.S. workforce must be more productive, more attuned to quality and customer service and better able to keep up with rapidly changing workplace technology. Without a firm grasp of basic workplace skills, America as a nation and American workers as individuals are destined to fall further and further behind.

As U.S. companies turn to strategies such as statistical process control, participatory management and team-based work structures to remain competitive interna-

tionally, the skill levels required of American workers will continue to rise. Predicts the U.S. Labor Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) in its June 1991 report, "If you do not develop a world-class workforce, your business inevitably will be at risk."

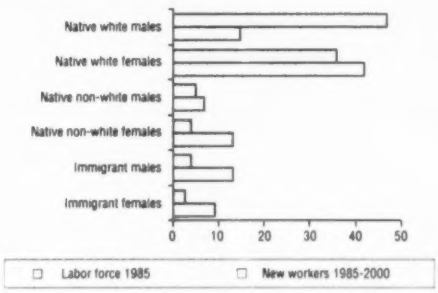
While 40% of today's jobs are classified as "low skill," only 27% of the jobs available in the year 2000 will be so classified. For the first time in history, a majority of the jobs being created require more than a high-school education. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, more than half of all new jobs created between 1984 and 2000 will require some education beyond high school (compared to 42% in 1984), and almost a third will require a college degree (compared to 22%).

Yet today, almost half of the large companies surveyed by the Conference Board say that between 15% and 35% of their current employees aren't capable of handling more complex tasks. And nearly 20% say they are already having difficulties finding applicants who can read well enough to qualify for entry-level jobs. Those findings are echoed in many other studies. More than one-fifth of the readers surveyed by *Nation's Business* in November 1990, for example, said they consistently experience difficulties in finding qualified workers. A Crotta, Glassman & Hoffman survey found that 75% of the 1,000 employers polled were having difficulty finding qualified workers.

The Changing Workforce

The labor market is changing from a buyer's market to a seller's market. The labor force will grow very slowly over the next 12 years; in fact, because of the "baby bust" of the 1970s, the rate of increase will be slower than at any time since the 1930s. By the year 2000, the workforce will be increasing by only 1% annually — one of the lowest annual rates in the nation's history. And by the year 2000, the "baby boomers" of the previous generation will be moving into their 50s. The average age of American workers will be 39, and workers aged 16-34 will account for only 38% of the work force compared to 50% today.

CHANGING U.S. WORKFORCE



Source: Tampa Tribune; Hudson Institute

At the same time that the U.S. workforce is growing very slowly, its composition is changing very rapidly. Roughly one-third of new entrants will come from minority groups that have traditionally received less and poorer-quality education. Other important groups of new workers will include immigrants, many of whom need to develop English language skills, and women, who traditionally have been steered away from certain types of education — particularly math and science — that are becoming more crucial to American business. By the year 2000, white males will account for less than 15% of new workers.

Florida Trends

In the 21st century, Florida will be the nation's third most populous state. The Florida Chamber of Commerce's landmark 1989 study, *Cornerstone: Foundations for Economic Leadership*, found that Florida's job market should grow by an average of 3.5% per year from 1986 to 2000. Some 8 million workers will be required to fill the state's jobs in 2000 compared to 5.2 million in 1986 — "an astounding 53% increase in only 14 years."

In fact, if all of the state's illiterate adults were to return to the classroom tomorrow, the number of students in Florida's public school system would double.

HELP WANTED

Between 1987 and 2000, Florida is projected to need millions of skilled workers, including —

5,620	more natural, computer and mathematical scientists
19,580	more workers in computer and mathematical occupations (such as statisticians, actuaries and computer systems analysts)
45,449	more engineers, architects and surveyors
59,838	more precision production workers
90,492	more workers in data processing and communications equipment occupations
141,597	more health practitioners and technicians
171,476	more workers in managenal and administrative occupations

Source: Florida Dept. of Labor and Employment Security

Further, *Cornerstone* reported, Florida is experiencing the same three trends as the nation is: Occupations in which a large proportion of workers have college training are among the fastest growing. Occupations in which a large proportion of workers have less than four years of high school are generally among the slowest growing. And, for the first time in history, a majority of new jobs will require at least some post-secondary education.

Industrial employment in Florida increased 23.7% between 1980 and 1985, while increasing only 8.1% in the nation as a whole, according to Florida Department of Education figures cited in a Florida Atlantic University study. Between 1975 and 1985, employment in Florida's high-technology sector doubled, while the number of high-tech firms increased by almost 255%. As of 1988, Florida ranked seventh in the nation in terms of high-technology industry.

Yet today, the U.S. Education Department estimates 15% of Florida's population — or more than 1.8 million people — is functionally illiterate. In fact, if all of the state's illiterate adults were to return to the classroom tomorrow, the number of students in Florida's public school system would double. What's more, without significant intervention, the number of illiterates in Florida will grow by more than 20% by the year 2000.

How does Florida compare to other states? Only five have higher rates of illiteracy, each having an estimated 16% of its population in the "illiterate" category. Six other states tie with Florida at the 15% level. The remaining 39 states have smaller illiteracy figures, some significantly smaller.

ILLITERATE POPULATION

6%	Utah
7%	Alaska, Wyoming
8%	Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, Vermont
9%	Kansas, Minnesota, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire
10%	Iowa, Wisconsin
11%	Delaware, Indiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota
12%	Arizona, Connecticut, Maryland, Missouri, North Dakota, Pennsylvania
13%	Alabama, Virginia
14%	California, Georgia, Illinois, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, West Virginia
15%	Arkansas, **FLORIDA**, Hawaii, Kentucky, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee
16%	Louisiana, Mississippi, New York, Texas, District of Columbia

Source: Estimates from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Education Dept.

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Workplace Literacy

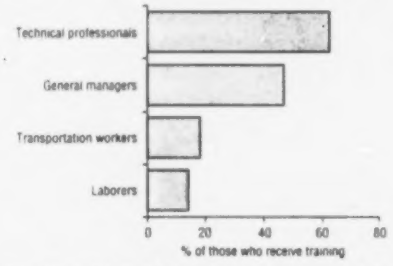
What does "literacy" mean in today's terms? One set of definitions can be found in Florida law: A "*functionally* literate adult" is one who achieves at an 8th-grade educational level — an estimated 14.5% of the state's population falls below this standard, according to the Florida Department of Education. A "*basic* literate adult" is one who achieves at a 4th-grade level — some 3.5% of the state's adults fail to measure up to this standard. (Combined, these estimates mean 18% of Florida's population qualifies as illiterate — a somewhat higher proportion than the U.S. Education Department estimates.)

But *workplace* literacy is something a little different. In schools, reading skills are taught separately from other subjects and are taught with the goal of increasing the students' ability to follow directions or learn facts for future recall. Writing skills are taught with an emphasis on description or on memorization. And math skills are taught with clearly identified problems.

On the job, however, workers must use their reading, writing and math skills in a very different manner. When reading, workers must be able to analyze and summarize information and monitor their own degree of comprehension. When writing, workers must analyze and conceptualize, synthesize and distill information. And when doing computation, workers must search through many words and ideas to discover which numbers and ideas are relevant, determine what to do with the numbers and then convey the correct solution to others.

For this reason, some workers have trouble applying skills they learned in school to the work they now do. And, for the same reason, the most successful workplace literacy programs approach basic skills in a different way than schools do — from the perspective of what a particular company's workers need to *do* with their reading, writing and math skills.

TRAINING GAP



Source: The Learning Enterprise, *American Society for Training and Development*

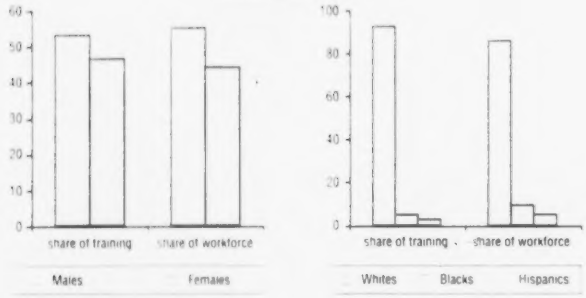
This kind of workplace learning has been shown by studies to be highly effective. Because the students are dealing with the real world, doing a real job, practicing their newly learned skills on real challenges and connecting their progress with real wages, they are often highly motivated.

Upgrading employees' skills is certainly an entrenched tradition in American business. Yet, although spending by employers, government agencies and unions on improving employee *basic skills* is not known precisely, the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment calculates that the total probably does not greatly exceed $1 billion per year — a fraction of what is spent on formal training at all levels. Ironically, billions more are spent on training for those who already have the best education: 79% of college graduates receive training from their employers and 71% of high school graduates do; but only 45% of high school dropouts get additional training once in the world of work.

Economically disadvantaged Americans, arguably those most in need, are the

least likely to receive training; only about 10% get post-secondary training of any kind and less than 3% receive training from their employers. Furthermore, old societal biases still surface in training decisions: non-white employees, for instance, are less likely to be trained than whites, and women (except in transportation) are less likely to receive training than men. Unfortunately, the categories of workers least likely to get training today are those who will make up highly important segments of the workforce in coming years.

WORKPLACE TRAINING



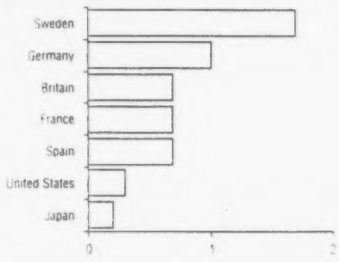
Source: The Learning Enterprise. *American Society for Training and Development*

The Competition

"In those nations with advanced economies, major efforts are under way to build and maintain a highly skilled and creative population. This means that, in the future, Florida's businesses and workers will be competing on the economic playing field with businesses and workers from around the world who have been trained to be highly creative and skilled in their work," observes the Chamber's *Cornerstone* report.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Percent of GNP spent on employment and training programs • 1987



Source: National Center on Education and the Economy, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

Indeed, according to the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment, one of the factors that has made Japan and Germany particularly competitive with America is their well-trained workforces, which allow them to take advantage of flexible production systems that can turn out high-quality products at low cost. The skills gap between American workers and their Japanese and German counterparts is revealed by the fact that U.S. companies are able to take basic skills for granted in their operations in Japan and Germany because production workers there can handle tasks that, in the United States, can be done only by supervisors or technicians.

How do other nations create such skilled workforces? The German federal and state governments offer substantial incentives to companies that train their workers. As a result, large German companies provide their workers with a wide range of free courses, either at company training centers or at outside institutions. Small German businesses pool their resources and operate external training centers through industry associations or local chambers of commerce.

But German businesses get off to a head start in their competition with

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American firms — Germany's apprenticeship system, which offers solid basic vocational skills to young people who do not go to college, provides three to four years of classroom instruction and on-the-job training that lead to certification in any of 450 occupations.

In contrast to Germany and other European nations, the Japanese government has a low level of involvement in adult training, although some government agencies provide subsidies for companies and industry groups with approved skill development plans. Nevertheless, Japan spends almost the same percent of its Gross National Product (GNP) on employment and training programs as the United States does. Most training is done by the private sector in Japan, with companies focusing on shop floor training through formalized job rotation and instruction programs. The Japanese excel at integrating on-the-job training with day-to-day operations. Because Japanese workers' basic skills are strong, managers and supervisors can do most training on the shop floor with little lost working time.

Impact of Illiteracy

The impact of illiteracy on workers and the workplace can be seen in a variety of circumstances: alarming accident rates and safety violations, cost overruns, equipment malfunctions, customer complaints, high employee turnover. Reports on the problem are replete with examples of clerks sending out instructions with disastrous factual errors, production workers incorrectly measuring raw materials, plant workers allowing machinery to break down, even a worker killed because he couldn't read safety directions.

When the U.S. Labor Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) issued its June 1991 report, it summed up the problem more succinctly: "Low skills lead to low wages and low profits."

The Sunbelt Institute estimates that in 1988 the cost of illiteracy was nearly $6,900 per worker in the eight southeastern states — due to time lost, poor performance and other employment-related problems. The total lost in the eight-state region was $24.8 billion a year. When the unemployed were factored in, the total rose to $57 billion. Nationally, another assessment found that adult illiteracy costs society $225 billion a year in lost industrial productivity, unrealized tax revenues, welfare, crime, poverty and related social ills.

Business Week reports that median family income (in inflation-adjusted dollars) has been stagnant since 1973. Worse yet, "real wages" in the U.S. have dropped by 6% since 1980 in many industries. Statistics show that although inflation and declining productivity reduced the earnings of *all* Americans, the earnings of the least educated declined the most.

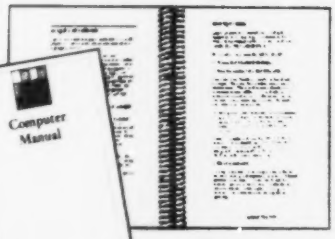
Notes a report issued jointly by the American Society for Training and Development and the U.S. Labor Department, "During the last recessionary period, high school dropouts experienced a staggering 40% decline in earnings," while those with a high school degree saw their earnings decline by 30%; those with some college, 26%; and those with a college degree, 11%. Between 1960 and 1984, the earning differential between high school graduates and dropouts increased from 30% to 60%.

One Solution: Literacy Partnerships

Given the size and gravity of the workforce illiteracy problem, more and more companies are beginning to take action. A recent American Society for Training and Development survey of *Fortune 500* companies, for instance, found that 22% were teaching employees reading, 41% were teaching writing and 31% were offering training in computation. A full 93% of the companies expect to be teaching employees basic work skills before the middle of the decade.

A few employers are well along in upgrading their workers' basic skills. Polaroid, for instance, began its workplace skills program in the 1960s. Other companies, though newer to the effort, are pioneering innovative approaches. Domino's Pizza, for one, has developed a video program to teach English to fast-food workers. Many of the most effective programs in the nation, according to a Conference Board study, have one thing in common — they are based on partnerships with schools, unions or government agencies.

The Florida companies profiled later in this Showcase have developed that same formula for success: most have created partnerships — whether it's with the local chamber, the county school system or the area's community college — to make it easier and less expensive to provide good workplace literacy training. The next chapter explores ways to structure such programs.



What Business Can Do

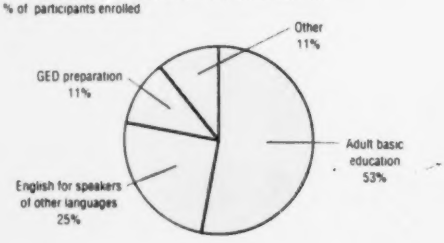
Florida employers set up workplace literacy programs for a number of reasons: they want to improve their workers' ability to cope with new technology or they want to raise productivity and reduce accidents and errors. Some want to improve their low-skilled workers' quality of life.

How employers go about setting up workplace programs depends largely on the specific needs of their company's workers and on the company's culture. This chapter discusses a number of approaches that have been used successfully and stresses the role business/education partnerships can play in creating effective, financially feasible programs.

Workplace Literacy in Florida

In 1989-90, at least 253 workplace literacy programs were operating in Florida, serving more than a million workers, according to information gathered by a Florida Atlantic University survey. The most popular component of these programs was adult basic education (accounting for more than half of the participants), followed by English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) students and General Educational Development (GED) test preparation students. As the previous chapter noted, workplace literacy programs are a particularly effective form of education because the workers involved tend to be highly motivated and get so many opportunities to practice what they learn. The Florida

FLORIDA WORKPLACE LITERACY ENROLLMENT
% of participants enrolled



Source: 1990 Florida Atlantic University survey

Atlantic University study pinpointed four additional advantages to literacy programs offered in the workplace:

- Many barriers to attendance are eliminated, including transportation, expense, time constraints, child care needs and distractions in the home.
- Possibilities for using knowledge immediately are increased.
- Supportive employers make it easier for illiterate workers to see further learning as a positive, productive endeavor rather than an embarrassment or a threat.
- Costs are reduced for both the employer and the agency involved in offering the workplace literacy program.

State Policy

In 1987, the Florida Legislature passed the Florida Adult Literacy Act, committing the state to a coordinated campaign using existing resources to reduce adult illiteracy by involving a number of state agencies, including the Department of Education, the Department of Labor and Employment Security, and the Governor's Office. The Florida Adult Literacy Plan set goals for the campaign:

- By 1995, the percentage of Florida adults with basic skills below the 4th-grade level would be no more than 2% — down from 3.5% in 1987; and
- By 1995, the percentage of Florida adults with basic skills below the 9th-grade level would be no more than 10% — down from 18% in 1987.

Additional legislation created seven Literacy Centers at community colleges and school districts (for the locations, see page 26 in the Resources chapter) funded by state lottery proceeds. Their task is to identify those who need literacy training and to direct them to the most appropriate resources.

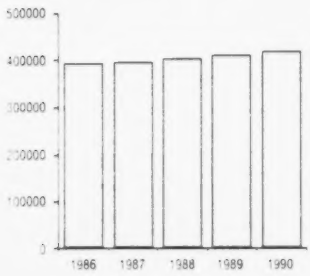
As a result of the 1987 legislation, Florida now funds and operates the largest adult basic education program in the South, according to the Southern Regional Literacy Commission.

ABE

Adult basic education (ABE) programs are geared toward helping adults attain basic literacy. They may cover everything from the "3 Rs" to life-coping skills and health. A 1990 Florida Atlantic University survey found that ABE programs accounted for 40% of the state's workplace literacy efforts.

Another option, adult secondary education (ASE) programs allow students to earn high school credits toward a diploma. The chart below shows combined ABE and ASE enrollment in Florida during the past five years.

ABE/ASE ENROLLMENT



Source: Florida Dept. of Education

The Starting Point

At every workplace, the first step toward upgrading employees' basic skills is to recognize the need to do so. Most employers aren't aware that their workers *have* basic skills deficiencies until developments bring it to their attention.

Sometimes the alarm is sounded by customers complaining about cashiers who can't make change. Employee complaints can also be revealing — workers having trouble with their duties because of literacy problems often signal their need for help in a variety of ways, although they are unlikely to admit that their skills are too weak to let them succeed at their jobs.

The feelings of shame and failure that often surround illiteracy, in fact, are a real barrier to identifying and aiding workers with weak skills. Many have learned to hide their skill deficiencies in a variety of clever ways and view employers' attempts to assess their skills and involve them in courses as an alarming threat to their job security and self-esteem. Sincere, repeated reassurances and creatively labeled programs (such as "personal enrichment opportunities" or "skills improvement classes") can go a long way toward helping workers take pride in their participation in workplace literacy classes — and in their improving skills.

Another type of workplace development often forces the issue of workplace literacy, according to both the National Commission for Employment Policy and the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment: the introduction of new technology. Workers who originally landed their jobs because they could cope with the technology in use at the time or who managed to work around their skill weaknesses during their early years of employment may encounter significant difficulties when new technology appears on the shop floor.

Managers may find that the implementation of new equipment and processes takes an inordinately long time or fails to achieve the expected levels of efficiency and quality. Only upon close investigation may the difficulties be traced back to workers who can't read their new instructions, who can't communicate effectively with other members of their team or who can't diagnose a problem and figure out how to solve it. The real handicap of workplace illiteracy is that workers with poor basic skills have never *learned how to learn* — a consequence for both the workers and their companies that is much more devastating than misspelling a few words, puzzling over a convoluted set of printed instructions or mis-adding a column of figures.

One other type of development can also reveal basic skills deficits in the workplace — high turnover and a persistent problem filling vacancies. Because workers with weak basic skills may not be able to earn promotions and raises, they often job-hop, seeking advancement elsewhere. Adding to that turnover are workers whose weak basic skills leave them feeling so frustrated and intimidated that they, too, go elsewhere. Employers determined to screen out workers with inadequate basic skills sometimes find they have problems finding enough entry-level employees — a situation that is likely to grow more severe in coming years. Workplace literacy programs allow these companies to "grow their own" skilled, loyal employees.

Once employers become aware of workplace literacy problems and the benefits of basic skills training, they can begin to assess the needs of their employees and to explore the variety of training options available.

Types of Literacy Programs

A simple way to categorize the types of workplace literacy programs is to divide them according to "how you do it" and "who you do it with."

For instance, the National Commission for Employment Policy has outlined five categories of "hows" for basic skills training:

- Classroom training — A low-cost way of training a group of workers, this method works best when what is taught is closely related to what is done on the job. However, classroom settings often prompt students to behave in a passive manner, while the teaching methods described below encourage students to learn more actively.
- Tutors — Although it is one of the more expensive options, one-on-one teaching is the most common way of teaching workplace literacy skills. It allows students to work at their own pace, provides a supportive relationship and makes it easier to schedule training.
- Work groups — Work group instruction allows three to 10 students to work with an instructor and to learn from one another. It is less costly than tutoring and a more active form of learning than

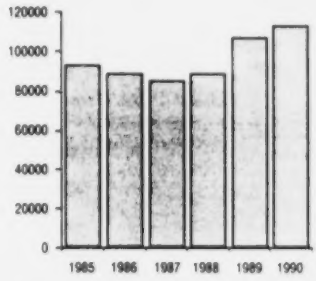
ESOL

English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) programs are particularly important in Florida because of the cosmopolitan nature of the state's workforce.

Presently 10% of Florida's population comes from outside the United States. By the year 2000, more than 20% of the state's workforce will be immigrants, most of whom will need help with English proficiency.

A 1990 Florida Atlantic University survey found that ESOL programs accounted for 25% of the state's workplace literacy efforts. The chart below shows ESOL enrollment in Florida during the past six years.

ESOL ENROLLMENT



Source: Florida Dept. of Education

classroom instruction. But it is also highly dependent on the quality of the available instructors and on assembling groups of workers with similar degrees of competency.

LITERACY MYTHS & FACTS

MYTH

Employer-sponsored literacy programs cost too much and drag on forever.

FACT

Employers can operate effective literacy programs according to the same good business principles they use every day — i.e., assessment and accountability. Programs can be structured in segments that run three to four months and can be evaluated before a decision is made about continuing the program. Employers and workers can share the time costs involved, scheduling sessions over lunch or at the end of the shift, sometimes with the employer paying wages for one hour of a two-hour session.

MYTH

Once they provide basic skills training, employers lose workers to better-paying firms.

FACT

On the contrary, employers often report that worksite literacy programs boost employee loyalty as well as lower absenteeism and diminish problems in the workplace. Employees want recognition for their new skills but non-monetary rewards (flex-time privileges, more praise from the boss, etc.) are greatly appreciated. Because workers with better skills can dramatically reduce waste and errors, employers report being able to give performance-based raises without increasing overall production costs.

MYTH

Literacy can wait.

FACT

School reforms will not bear fruit in the workplace for decades. In the meantime, employers still need workers who are literate enough to be trained to operate new equipment, use new procedures or transition into another job. Although some employers don't plan to change their product, management or technologies, even "mom and pop" operations are compelled to change when their clients and suppliers adopt new technologies. By upgrading workers' basic skills now, employers can be assured that their organization can cope with change — whenever it happens.

Source: Based on an article in Southern Growth, *Southern Growth Policy Board*

• Computer-assisted instruction — Computer learning provides workers with self-paced instruction, scheduling flexibility and enhanced privacy. But it has high fixed costs and sometimes poses difficulties in terms of designing activities that are based on the workplace *and* appropriate to the adult learner's skills. Computer learning is usually a supplement to classroom instruction.

• Interactive videodisks — The newest instruction method, interactive videodisks allow workers to watch and listen to a training video and then respond to a series of prompts. The technology has many of the advantages of computer-aided instruction but seems to engage learners more. However, videodisks come at a high cost and lack some of the flexibility of the other methods.

In addition to the "hows," there are the "whos." Some large companies, Aetna, Polaroid and Eastman Kodak among them, develop their own internal courses. But, as noted in the previous chapter, many of the most successful workplace literacy programs are structured as partnerships. The business provides the facilities, the job-related materials, release time for employee-students, and employee incentives and rewards. The education institution provides specially trained instructors and helps develop a customized curriculum along with assessment, testing and evaluation procedures.

The education partners may be local school districts, community colleges or trade association education affiliates, such as the American Institute of Banking or the American Hospital Association's Literacy Task Force. Another option is to form a three-way partnership among the business, the union representing the employees and a training company.

For small businesses, forming alliances with other employers through the local chamber of commerce or with other tenants in an office park may allow the companies to pool their resources and launch a basic skills program that would not be feasible for individual companies.

Building an Effective Program

The Florida Literacy Coalition recommends that employers keep six key

concepts in mind when creating a workplace literacy program:

• Teach basic skills using the content of specific jobs to provide context.

• Teach reading strategies that are appropriate to workplace needs. For instance, on-the-job reading must accomplish specific tasks and lead to judgments and solutions. Specific reading strategies enable workers to do these things.

• Build on the employees' prior knowledge of job content to teach new concepts.

• Customize the curriculum to suit the needs of your company and the specific jobs that must be done. Relying totally on commercially prepared materials or materials developed for other companies is rarely suitable.

• Use actual job materials for instruction to help employees understand what their jobs actually entail and what the performance requirements really are.

• State learning objectives clearly and explicitly as they relate to skills needed on the job. Objectives that use non-job-related criteria — such as reading at a certain grade level — are not relevant and their value won't be apparent to the employee.

Like the Florida Literacy Coalition, the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) and the National Alliance of Business (NAB) stress the importance of an applied learning method that uses a pragmatic, functional context approach to job-specific training. This approach stresses improving the basic skills most critical to competent job performance. Traditional adult basic education courses are passive, non-work-oriented and geared to teaching through abstract concepts. In essence, they force workers who need basic skills training to repeat the learning methodology that didn't work for them when they were school kids. These classes also tend to teach reading, writing and math as three distinct and separate courses. In the workplace, however, people must integrate all three skills with problem-solving and decision-making skills.

Linking learning to a worker's actual job is also more cost-effective than broad-based training. Because they will immediately and repeatedly use the newly acquired knowledge, trainees learn faster and better, raising their productivity as they learn. "The challenge is to begin with the basics and to integrate the learning of those basics into everyday job tasks, so that instruction has real relevance and immediate applicability for the learner," says William Kolberg, NAB president. "This is the most successful way to teach adults."

11 STEPS FOR CREATING A WORKPLACE LITERACY PROGRAM

Step 1	Establish a joint planning and implementation team.
Step 2	Develop preliminary program goals and target audiences.
Step 3	Agree on the responsibilities of the partners.
Step 4	Conduct a literacy audit.
Step 5	Develop specific program objectives.
Step 6	Design the curriculum.
Step 7	Recruit participants.
Step 8	Screen participants.
Step 9	Select and train teachers.
Step 10	Deliver instruction.
Step 11	Evaluate and provide feedback.

Source: Adapted from Workplace Literacy: A Resource Book, Florida Atlantic University

Another recommendation from the ASTD is to include an in-house marketing campaign in the workplace literacy program action plan. The goal of the marketing campaign is to marshal management and union support for the program and to connect the program to the employer's competitiveness strategies.

GED

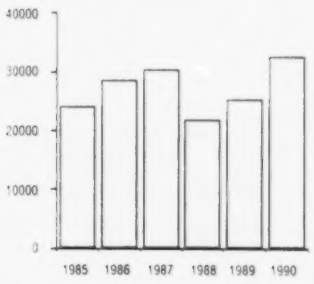
Since 1942, more than 10 million American adults have obtained their high school diplomas through the General Educational Development (GED) program — that's almost 15% of all high-school credentials issued in the U.S. over the course of almost half a century.

Preparation for the GED exam includes studies in writing, social studies, science, literature and math.

Most employers view GED studies as a step beyond basic skills training, but many companies that set up basic skills programs go on to add a GED preparation component because of strong worker interest. A 1990 Florida Atlantic University survey found that 12% of the state's workplace literacy programs were for GED preparation.

The chart below shows the number of GED diplomas awarded in Florida during the past six years.

GED DIPLOMAS



Source: Florida Dept. of Education

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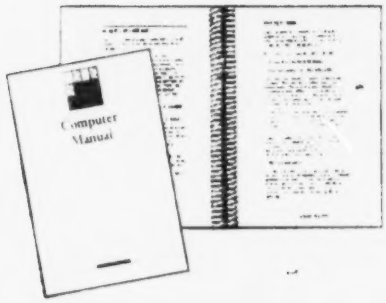

What Florida Employers Are Doing

Although each business is different in terms of the basic skills its workers have and the resources the company can commit to improving those skills, a variety of approaches to basic skills training means that virtually every business can find a way to upgrade its workforce.

This chapter takes a look at ten Florida basic skills-building programs — all of them involving business and most of them partnerships with a public-sector organization such as a local school system or community college. By joining with educators, the businesses profiled here have managed to make the most of their limited training resources and to launch excellent training programs in relatively short periods of time.

Individual Employers

Becker Holding Corporation
Fort Pierce

A Florida law requiring truck drivers to pass a new written and oral exam by 1992 threatened to run Becker Holding Corporation's drivers right off the road. "We had men in their 50s and 60s with 30-year-long safe driving records who couldn't read well enough to pass the written test," said Bill Klein, the Fort

Pierce-based citrus packing and processing firm's human resources director.

Then at a St. Lucie County Chamber of Commerce "sunrise seminar," Klein heard the speaker, Raymond Isenburg, vice president of applied science and technology at Indian River Community College, ask his audience to challenge the college with their specific training needs. Klein spoke up. "Ray immediately recognized the problems faced by career drivers who were educationally disadvantaged," Klein recalled. "He appointed a task force from the college to assess a pilot group of Becker drivers and eventually customized an educational project which became the *Keep On Truckin'* Program."

Keep On Truckin', taught at the college or at an off-campus site, brings basic literacy skills together with the trucking-related knowledge needed to pass the new commercial driver's license exam. The manual the state supplies for the test is written at a 9th-grade reading level. The nine Becker drivers in the pilot group were reading at a 5th-grade level or below. They were hardly alone. The college estimates that 70% to 80% of Florida's commercial vehicle operators will need some form of literacy instruction to pass the test.

After only a few *Truckin'* sessions, some Becker drivers were able to pass the exam. Others took several months. But, said Klein, none felt threatened because the program lets drivers work at their own pace. In the end, the Becker drivers all kept their licenses, Becker got a customized workplace literacy program for free and Indian River Community College found it had a hit on its hands.

The U.S. Department of Education awarded one of its few workplace literacy grants — totaling $193,000 — to the college for *Truckin'*, which picked up the tab for the Becker pilot group and for others, according to Dale Jenkins, the college's workplace literacy specialist. The Treasure Coast Harvesting Association, a group of 22 grove owners in Okeechobee, St. Lucie, Indian River and Martin counties, formed a partnership with the college to provide *Truckin'* sessions to dozens of truck drivers on a flexible schedule. The Florida Department of Transportation's district office and Fort Pierce Utilities asked the college to customize the program for their specific workplaces. Meanwhile, the modular curriculum has been translated into Spanish and the college plans to distribute the workbook nationally. For more information, contact Dale Jenkins, 407/468-4753.

We see our non-English-speaking employees struggle with everyday things and as their employer, we feel an obligation to make their lives easier.

Karen Davis

Bee Gee Shrimp Inc.

Bee Gee Shrimp Inc.

Lakeland

Bee Gee Shrimp Inc.'s Lakeland seafood-processing plant is a mini United Nations. Among the 600 workers there are Hispanics, Chinese, Cambodians and Romanians.

"We see our non-English-speaking employees struggle with everyday things — like making a doctor's appointment or writing a check — and as their employer, we feel an obligation to make their lives

easier," said Karen Davis, the personnel director. Managers and supervisors have been very supportive because it "helps our employees understand work rules, safety procedures, evaluations, etc.," she said.

When the company began offering English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) lessons two years ago, managers realized it might backfire. "Sure, when they learn the language and other skills, we run the risk of losing them to other jobs," acknowledged Davis. "But we're willing to assume that risk."

Today, with some 75 employees participating in the program, Bee Gee has proof that encouraging workers to upgrade their skills pays off. "The response to the classes has been incredible. Our employees are very proud of their skills, very appreciative, and therefore very loyal," said Davis. "Our workforce has stabilized ... We definitely don't do as much hiring as we used to and not many people are leaving. That wasn't the case three or four years ago."

And when Bee Gee does hire, the language classes make it easier. "It's ended up as a recruitment tool. Churches and various agencies often refer immigrants to us for employment," she said.

The classes are held on site during company time. Workers are pulled off the line and paid for the time they spend in class. They also earn credits toward American citizenship and, when they present their certificates of completion to the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, the federal government reimburses the Polk County School Board for part of the cost of supplying books and a teacher to Bee Gee's program.

That teacher, Enixa Rodriguez, gets high praise from Davis. "Even though she doesn't speak all the languages represented in the class, she inspires the students and takes a special interest in each. They love her." Her students' enthusiasm is catching. Because of strong employee interest, Bee Gee is offering General Educational Development (GED) and Spanish classes. One Cambodian, who couldn't speak English when he started work at Bee Gee two years ago, is now fluent in English and is learning Spanish. For more information, contact Karen Davis, 813/687-4411.

WHAT ABOUT YOUR COMPANY?

When it comes to improving the basic skills of Florida's workforce, the number of employers with valuable experiences to share vastly exceeds the space available in this small report.

The companies highlighted in this chapter were suggested by a variety of sources, including a survey of Florida Chamber of Commerce Members. The decision on which companies to include here was based on a number of factors. For instance, to provide a cross section of employers, we looked for a variety of types: different size companies, different lines of business, different geographical locations. Some are Chamber Members, some are not.

If your company is involved in an innovative effort to upgrade your employees' basic skills, please send details to —

Showcase
Florida Chamber of Commerce
PO Box 11309
Tallahassee, FL 32302-3309

Frito-Lay Inc.

Orlando

When Frito-Lay Inc. opened its Orlando plant 26 years ago, it hired workers with just the right skills. But as technology advanced, the workers' skills did not.

Some companies in similar situations have fired the low-skilled and hired the higher-skilled to replace them. Not Frito-Lay. "Our long-term employees are a tremendous asset," said Dave Nicholson, the plant manager. "We believe that it is much smarter to build on our current employee base by enhancing our experienced employees' basic skills than to go out and hire new employees who may possess strong basic skills, but know nothing about making Frito-Lay products."

The potato-chip-maker turned to the Orange County Public Schools' Mid-Florida Technical Institute for help with bringing workers' skills up to a level that would let them cope with computer-integrated manufacturing equipment and complex productivity, quality assurance and problem-solving programs.

The institute tested the plant's workers on a voluntary basis and found 35% to 40% had reading skill deficiencies. Results were mailed confidentially to the test-takers, not a few of whom were afraid they were about to be fired.

Instead they were told about the two-hour, twice-a-week workplace literacy classes the institute was going to begin at the plant. That was in 1988. In the next two years, 40% of the plant's approximately 350 workers took the classes, which are conducted during the workers' regular shifts. Their teacher, Anne Jackson, used the company benefits package and the frying machine directions to start her students reading. "She's turned literacy into *workplace* literacy at Frito-Lay," said Charles King, the plant's training director.

A section of the plant's warehouse has been converted into a classroom, complete with library and computers. Tutors are available for anyone who wants one-on-one instruction, and the computers are also available during off hours for additional study.

"When we first began the program, there were employees who were embarrassed to attend classes," said King. "But those who were skeptical about it have ended up telling other employees about how good the classes are." The most important thing, King believes, is to make sure employees know that management is sincere about helping them improve their skills and "to be sensitive to employees' individuality and pride. Many have hidden their lack of learning for a long time and are scared of tests and evaluations." For more information, contact Charles King, 407/295-1810, ext. 204.

We believe that it is much smarter to build on our current employee base by enhancing our experienced employees' basic skills than to go out and hire new employees who may possess strong basic skills, but know nothing about making Frito-Lay products.

Dave Nicholson

Frito-Lay Inc.

Gadsden County Chamber of Commerce

Gadsden County

We're trying to get the workers to another educational level, so they won't have such a hard time finding another job when this one ends.

Rick McCaskill

Gadsden County Chamber of Commerce

Once, Gadsden County had a thriving shade tobacco industry, a labor-intensive business in which virtually all the work was done by hand. But after the U.S. government decided to allow tobacco from other countries to be imported without high tariffs, Gadsden's economy took a downturn in the 1970s.

"We were left with a lot of laborers — most of them uneducated and unskilled," explained Rick McCaskill, executive director of the Gadsden County Chamber of Commerce. In the 20 years since, the children of those workers have grown up, still under-educated and unskilled, but even more numerous. "That's why we're trying to institute at-work education."

The county's functional illiteracy rate is calculated at 36%; its basic illiteracy rate at 16%. An increasing number of low-English-proficient residents makes the problem even more severe. The impact shows up in other statistics: Gadsden has one of the highest poverty rates in Florida — 26.3% of its families — and one of the lowest per-capita income figures — $15,584.

In the past, Gadsden has "always approached the problem from a county-wide perspective. Now we're focusing in on specific businesses," said Ray Blitch, principal of Gadsden County Adult and Community Education. Through an innovative joint effort called Workforce Gadsden, the school board and the local chamber are pushing literacy training out into workplaces around the county. The school board administers the program, the chamber recruits the businesses. Together they have applied for a $50,000 grant from the Florida Department of Education to fund a full-time workplace literacy instructor/coordinator.

McCaskill has found a high level of interest among Gadsden employers. Four businesses already have literacy programs up and running. One of them is Quincy Farms, a mushroom grower with about 450 employees, many of them laborers who can't speak English. Quincy is offering on-site ESOL classes, taught by Gadsden County Adult and Community Education, along with Spanish classes for its English-speaking managers.

The Floridin Company, which mines and processes fuller's earth (a fine-grained clay used in makeup and kitty litter), had already begun offering on-site GED classes for its 200 employees when Workforce Gadsden was organized because its workers were having trouble reading signs and instructions on new machines. Niagara Wire, which also employs about 200, offers on-site basic skills and GED courses to all three of its shifts.

And Quincy's city government is conducting classes in basic reading, math and GED preparation for employees, mainly because it expects many of its sanitation workers to lose their jobs in the next couple of years through privatization and mechanization. "We're trying to get the workers to another educational level, so they won't have such a hard time finding another job when this one ends," said McCaskill. The city gives participants release time to attend classes at a local school.

When McCaskill approaches businesses, the usual reaction is, "What will this cost us?" McCaskill has a simple answer: "Not a red cent." After that, the

greatest resistance tends to come from employees who are reluctant to "admit they don't have a high school diploma or don't know how to read. For example, in one company we polled, there are 48 employees who don't have diplomas. Yet only two of those workers volunteered to be assessed and take part in classes." For more information, contact Rick McCaskill, 904/627-9231.

Johnson & Johnson Medical Inc.

Pinellas County

When the Pinellas County School District agreed to provide teachers, materials, supervision and statistical progress reports for workplace literacy classes at Johnson & Johnson Medical Inc.'s Safety Harbor facility, it laid down one condition: at least 12 people had to attend the classes.

That, as it turned out, was no problem. The first class, which began in 1990, had 28 students. In 1991, 32 enrolled. And the students are doing more than just improving their reading and math. Several in the first class went on to earn GED degrees, and three are now in college.

Most of them may not have realized that they took "literacy" lessons. "I called it 'personal enrichment opportunities.' The word 'literacy' is insulting and embarrassing to most people," said Suzanne Garon, Johnson & Johnson Medical's employee benefits administrator. The company's 650 employees (550 of them production workers) make custom-designed surgical trays — complete with instruments — for operating rooms.

The company offers the classes for two reasons. "Since we've automated our plant and made other changes, we've found that some employees have had trouble keeping up," Garon said. Others — technology notwithstanding — had basic reading problems or lacked a high school diploma. "Many of our employees are seniors in their 60s and many of them never finished high school. And that's been okay because they've had to rely on their hands instead of mentally processing things. But that's changing in today's workplace."

Dottie Ross, director of adult education for the Pinellas County School District, has noted an upswing in workplace literacy classes. Between March and May 1991 alone, 12 new basic skills classes started in area businesses. "Employers have to realize [workplace literacy] is part of their future. It's not a one-time deal, either. Employers have [provided training] for years to management, but now it's time to do it for the rank-and-file employee, too."

Johnson & Johnson Medical provides a classroom, reference books for check-out and five employees who volunteer to be tutors — including Garon herself. School district staff come in to give a "locator test" to all interested employees. "Then based on those scores, a 'prescription' is written up for each student on what he or she needs to study," she said. "That way, students aren't

Employers have provided training for years to management, but now it's time to do it for the rank-and-file employee, too.

Dottie Ross

Pinellas County School District

competing against each other; they're learning what they need to learn." The company requires its employees to commit their own time to the two-hour, twice-weekly classes. "If there's a price, even if it's non-monetary, I believe the participants take it more seriously." For more information, contact Suzanne Garon, 813/726-8421.

We're using a curriculum that will include daily-living-type classes as well as basic skills ... like how to write checks or how to read the classifieds.

Sam Lauff
Marion County Vocational, Adult and Community Education

MFM (Mid-Florida Mining) Industries, Inc.

Ocala/Marion County

One of the signs that some of MFM Industries, Inc.'s 160 to 200 employees could benefit from basic skills classes was that many of the employees, when filling out job applications, insisted on filling them out in an outside office or at home. "They didn't want anyone to know they couldn't read," said Dave Titus, vice president of human resources and public affairs.

"In this business, an employee with an 8th- or 9th-grade education is going to weld or drive a truck as well as a Ph.D.," Titus continued. "But he'll be a happier, more effective and, most importantly, safer worker if he has effective reading skills."

The basic skills classes at the clay mining company in Lowell are still in the "embryonic stages," according to Titus. Mid-Florida plans to offer the on-site, twice-a-week classes as a "perk" and to recruit 10 to 15 students one by one. "We've discussed the program informally with a few employees and they're expressing great interest. In fact, we plan to begin classes with 13 to 15 students in September. I think it's important, though, that we recruit on an individual basis and keep the classes low-key because they're sensitive to being undereducated," said Titus. "For us, the response has been tremendous. We've had support for this program from top to bottom."

The company will get materials and the services of a teacher for free from the local school district. "We're using a curriculum that will include daily-living-type classes as well as basic skills ... like how to write checks or how to read the classifieds," said Sam Lauff, principal of Marion County's Vocational, Adult and Community Education.

Lauff is delighted with MFM's plans. "They have the greatest attitude toward workplace literacy I've seen," he said. Working from a list of area businesses from the Ocala/Marion County Chamber of Commerce, Lauff has tried getting 40 other area businesses interested, but aside from Ocala's city government and Pall Pneumatics, the response has been "pitiful." "You have to bang down the door of most businesses just to get them to let you tell them what literacy programs we can offer them."

While Lauff is well aware of the bottom-line benefits companies can gain by upgrading their workers' skills, he found that Mid-Florida Mining wasn't particularly interested in that. "They're not conducting these classes hoping they'll get something back," he said. "They just want to increase the quality of life of their employees." For more information, contact Sam Lauff or Mary Gouge, 904/629-7545.

Motorola Inc.

Boynton Beach

Imagine yourself applying for a job in a large factory and being interviewed by production workers instead of by a supervisor, then coming to work on your first day and going through an orientation led by your new co-workers. Imagine walking into the factory and seeing workers discussing how to maximize production volume, deciding how to ensure factory coverage during vacation season, giving tours to people from other companies who have come to learn more about the value that basic skills training and teams bring to the organization.... Seem far-fetched? Actually, it's not.

During the past decade, Motorola has been evolving from a traditionally-structured (chain of command-driven) organization to a team-based culture. "We believe that, when provided with a supportive environment, those doing the work are in the best position to develop and implement improvements," says Susan Sambor, Senior Personnel Operations Manager at Motorola's Boynton Beach plant. "Our overall quality continues to improve as we increase our use of the full range of experience, insight and creative ability in our people."

A successful transition was dependent upon skilled workers, people who could perform multiple job functions. A math assessment done in 1988 showed that only 40% of Motorola's factory workers could answer a question such as, "Ten is what percent of 100?" What seemed at first to be just a weakness in math skills turned out to include weakness in reading comprehension.

Although some of Motorola's competitors fire workers when their skills are out of date, and hire better-skilled replacements, Motorola has a 53-year tradition of job security. Motorola resolved to develop a workforce with basic skills at senior high school level by 1995. The company launched a voluntary basic skills program in 1988, paying for half the time workers spent in class. Once it became clear that many of the employees couldn't afford the time or money for the classes, Motorola increased its commitment to developing basic skills. In April 1990, Motorola began to provide all classes on company time and made participation mandatory for all factory workers who could not pass the basic skills tests. The "New Directions " program is now offered around-the-clock for all shifts. The students spend four to six hours a week in class, on company time, working on basic reading and arithmetic or English for speakers of other languages (ESOL).

"New Directions has brought about vast improvements in our products, quality and work life," Sambor says. "Employees are developing the skills required to assume more and more of the responsibilities traditionally considered solely the responsibility of managers. The successful implementation of these programs has reinforced management's belief that employee education and involvement are vital links in Motorola's ongoing improvement process."

For more information, contact Susan Sambor, 407/364-2490.

Employees are developing the skills required to assume more and more of the responsibilities traditionally considered solely the responsibility of managers.

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Susan Sambor

Motorola Inc.

Palm Beach Post

Palm Beach

Some employees may feel embarrassed about needing help to read better, but who would feel embarrassed about signing up for computer training? Nobody, reasoned the *Palm Beach Post* when it shelled out $5,000 to buy three computers for its basic skills classes.

The computers make good learning tools because students can work at their own pace and get comfortable with a common workplace technology. But working on computers also gives adult learners' self-esteem a boost, according to Gale Howden, the *Post's* director of community relations. "We call it a skills improvement class," she said. "We don't call it a literacy class."

We had an employee who came in while he was on vacation, just to attend the classes.

Gale Howden
Palm Beach Post

By any name, the *Post's* program is a success. Conducted in conjunction with the Palm Beach School District's Adult Education Program, it began in 1989 with 15 students; today, it averages about 50. Classes are kept small — 10 to 15 employees in each. Trained, volunteer tutors drawn from the *Post's* staff supplement the teachers' efforts by providing one-on-one instruction in basic skills, ESOL and GED preparation.

Although the *Post* awards cash bonuses to employees who reach certain goals — those who earn GED certificates, for instance, get $250 — Howden sees the money as more of a token of the company's commitment to its employees than an incentive. For those who begin with very low skill levels, earning that GED could take six years of twice-a-week classes. "It's going to take them a long time before they realize any of that money," she said.

The real incentives are the quality of the classes themselves and the opportunity to grow, she believes. "We had an employee who came in while he was on vacation, just to attend the classes."

The incentives for the company itself include increasing productivity and safety, reducing turnover and allowing more employee advancement. The newspaper also wants to practice what it preaches in its public service ads supporting literacy programs. Said Howden, "We would be in a funny situation if we said, 'We're not going to do the same thing for our own employees.'" For more information, contact Gale Howden, 407/820-4131.

Tropicana Products, Inc.

Bradenton

"Build your program slowly over time and keep classes small and personal. You'll be able to make more of an impact that way," advises Terri Holloway, Tropicana Products, Inc.'s manager of employee and community relations. The citrus-processing company, which employs about 3,600 in Bradenton, began offering ESOL classes last fall by including only 10 participants in the 10-week course.

One factor in Tropicana's decision to start small was anxiety among the prospective students. "Recruiting was tough because people were skeptical about what the classes meant. We did one-on-one recruiting ... let area managers tell their workers about it individually," said Holloway. Even when classes began, the employees involved "were extremely cautious at first. But everyone has stuck out the program and are telling others about it." In fact, some students bring friends to the classes.

When it came time to recruit the next class, finding students was much easier. "People knew more about the program," explained Holloway — and about its benefits. Tropicana offers a pay incentive program, and students earn points toward American citizenship. The classes are free and held right after work to make them convenient.

The Manatee County Vocational School supplies a teacher. Tropicana supplies materials and a classroom. "The booklets we use for class were really our only expense. That small investment was certainly worth it," said Holloway. The curriculum is based on work-related printed materials used by Tropicana as well as standard ESOL coursework.

Tropicana's intent is to reduce some of the communication problems with its large number of Spanish-speaking workers. To that end, the company also offers Spanish classes for its English-speaking employees. Noted Holloway, "Most of those who participated were supervisors ... kind of an, 'I'll meet you halfway' thing." For more information, contact Terri Holloway, 813/747-4461.

Build your program slowly over time and keep classes small and personal. You'll be able to make more of an impact that way.

Terri Holloway

Tropicana Products, Inc.

Vanity Fair Mills

Santa Rosa County

This is the best thing we've ever done for our employees. They really value it.

Karen Retherford

Vanity Fair Mills

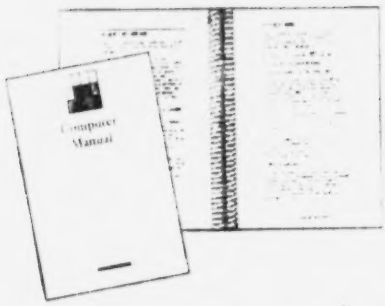
Each time a Vanity Fair Mills worker passes the GED exam, work stops and the graduate is presented with her diploma in front of all her co-workers. "There's no stigma attached to taking classes and getting the GED. Everyone thinks it's great," explained Karen Retherford, the personnel manager at the sewing factory in Milton in Florida's Panhandle.

In 1990, 29 of Vanity Fair's 800 employees — all but 30 of whom are women — earned their GED diplomas after taking the skills classes the company holds with the help of the Santa Rosa County School District. So far in 1991, ten more workers have passed the GED exam and Retherford expects another couple of dozen to do so before the year is out.

All told, at the county's most recent GED graduation ceremony, 22 Vanity Fair workers received diplomas. One was 56 years old. "She was so proud — had the cap and gown and everything," Retherford recalled. "This is the best thing we've ever done for our employees. They really value it."

All employees are eligible to take a "predictor" test that assesses what skills they need to work on. About 75% of those tested are ready to take the GED. Those who aren't, can take classes at nearby Locklin Vocation School less than two miles from the mill during convenient evening hours. The classes are free. Students pay for their texts ($1 per subject) — "If we handed them everything, it wouldn't mean as much," said Retherford. And the company pays its students for the time they spend taking the assessment test and the GED exam. "It costs us a day and a half of production time per person ... That comes to about $130 per person, and it's well worth it."

The results can be impressive. A Vietnamese employee who couldn't read English was reading at a 7th-grade level after only a year. Retherford gives a lot of credit to Santa Rosa County's Adult Education Program: "The school board here works well with businesses. They go out of their way to accommodate us." For more information, contact Karen Retherford, 904/623-3813.



Resources

Florida Resources

Florida Atlantic University, Department of Educational Leadership, Adult Education Office, Boca Raton, FL 33431, 407/367-3550. The Adult Education Office has published the 116-page *Workplace Literacy: A Resource Book.* It includes information about workplace literacy programs operating in Florida and an extensive bibliography of resources.

Florida Chamber of Commerce, 136 S. Bronough St., PO Box 11309, Tallahassee, FL 32302, 904/425-1200 or 800/940-4879. Additional copies of this Showcase report are $10 per copy. Also, the Chamber administers the **Florida Education and Industry Coalition,** which sponsors forums, research and policy analysis, conferences, workshops and task forces to identify how business and education can work together.

Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Adult and Community Education, Knott Building, Tallahassee, FL 32399-0400, 904/488-8201. The bureau, which administers the adult and community education programs of the county public school systems throughout Florida, provides referrals, technical assistance and materials, including Adult and Community Education Partnerships in Florida. The bureau is also charged with administering the Florida Adult Literacy Plan. In addition, the Department of Education's **Education Clearinghouse for Economic Development** (800/342-9271 or 904/488-0400) can provide personalized information packets on education programs in the state, including listings of local literacy programs.

Florida Literacy Coalition, 100 Weldon Blvd., Bldg. 3, Sanford, FL 32771, 800/237-5113 or 407/332-4442. The coalition publishes a bimonthly newsletter, the *Bulletin*, coordinates a

statewide literacy information network, arranges for tutor training and provides other services to help create, develop and maintain local adult literacy programs.

Literacy Centers. In 1987, the Florida Legislature established literacy centers at Brevard Community College, the Broward County School District, Daytona Beach Community College, Miami-Dade Community College, Okaloosa-Walton Community College, the Polk County School District and the Santa Rosa County School District. The centers provide recruitment, referral and assistance services to complement existing public and private literacy programs.

Literacy Volunteers of America, Florida State Organizations, c/o Washington County Council on Aging, 408 South Boulevard West, Chipley, FL 32428, 904/638-0917. The national office of LVA develops training programs and materials for state and local literacy organizations across the country. Publications, including *Evaluation Study of Program Effectiveness* ($7.50), are available from the national office, 5795 Widewaters Parkway, Syracuse, NY 13214, 315/445-8000.

State Library of Florida, R.A. Gray Bldg., 508 S. Bronough St., Tallahassee, FL 32301, 904/487-2651. The state library provides information on literacy activities at public libraries throughout Florida. It also provides technical assistance with identifying training resources for tutoring and public relations, and provides information about funding and grant opportunities.

National Resources

American Society for Training and Development, 1630 Duke St., Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313, 703/683-8100. The society has a number of publications available, including *Job-Related Literacy Training: Teaching Reading on the Job* ($10.50) and *Training Partnerships: Linking Employers and Providers* (single copies are free). Other society publications, such as *Workplace Basics Training Manual* ($34.95), which provides step-by-step guidelines for planning and implementing an effective program, are available from Jossey-Bass Inc., 350 Sansome St., San Francisco, CA 94104.

Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy, 1002 Wisconsin Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20007, 202/338-2006. The foundation awards grants to literacy organizations.

Business Council for Effective Literacy, 1221 Avenue of the Americas, 35th Floor, New York, NY 10020, 212/512-2415. The council provides technical assistance, issues a free monthly newsletter and publishes other relevant materials, including the *Workforce/ Workplace Literacy Packet* ($15), which contains a collection of articles; *State Directory of Key Literacy Contacts* ($10); *Functional Illiteracy Hurts Business* (no cost for up to 25 copies of the leaflet, 25¢ per copy thereafter); *Job-Related Basic Skills: A Guide for Planners of Employee Programs* ($15); and *Developing an Employee Volunteer Literacy Program* ($5).

Center for Workforce Education, Laubach Literacy Action, 1320 Jamesville Ave., Box 131, Syracuse, NY 13210, 315/422-9121. The center publishes materials for employers, unions, educators and learners, and provides on-site training to businesses.

The Coalition for Literacy, Box 81826, Lincoln, NE 68501, 800/228-8813. The coalition of businesses and associations operates **National Literacy Hotline.**

Commission on Skills of the American Workforce, National Center on Education and the Economy, 39 State St., Rochester, NY 14614, 716/546-7620. The commission published a major report, *America's Choice: High Skills or Low Wages* ($18), that underscores the economic importance of a skilled workforce.

The Conference Board, 845 Third Ave., New York, NY 10022, 212/759-0900. Publications include *Literacy in the Workforce* (Report #947; members and nonprofits, $20; all others, $80), which reports on a mail survey of 1,600 manufacturing and service firms' experience with illiteracy and profiles several workplace programs.

Council for Adult and Experiential Learning, 223 W. Jackson, Suite 510, Chicago, IL 60606, 312/922-5905. The council designs and administers workplace training programs for a number of large companies and for corporate/labor partnerships, including a US West Communications/Communications Workers of America/International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers partnership, a United Auto Workers/Ford Motor Co. partnership, and a Scott Paper Co. workforce training venture.

Education Commission of the States, 707 17th St., Suite 2700, Denver, CO 80202-3427, 303/299-3600. The commission's Adult Literacy Project has produced a 12-minute video, *Adult Literacy* ($30 a copy or $15 for rental, plus postage), to help policymakers understand the connection between literacy and economic development.

ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult Career and Vocational Education, National Center for Research in Vocational Education, Ohio State University, 1900 Kenny Rd., Columbus, OH 43210, 800/848-4815. The clearinghouse has a number of relevant publications, including *Adult Literacy: Skills for the American Work Force, Measures for Adult Literacy Programs* and *Adult Literacy: Industry-Based Training Programs.*

Human Resources Development Institute, AFL-CIO, 815 16th St. NW, Washington, DC 20006, 202/638-3912. The union publishes *Worker-Centered Learning: A Union Guide to Workplace Literacy* ($5.50), which includes a nine-step plan for designing basic skills programs.

Institute for the Study of Literacy, Penn State University, 248 Calder Way, Room 307, University Park, PA 26801, 814/863-3777. The institute offers several literacy publications, including a "Buyer's Guide" ($15) to 100 software programs that can be used for adult basic skills training.

National Alliance of Business, 1201 New York Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20005, 202/289-2888. The alliance holds conferences, provides technical assistance and disseminates materials on job training systems and workplace learning. The alliance has also published an in-depth training manual, *Literacy At Work: The Workbook for Program Developers* ($200), that is available from Simon & Schuster Workplace Resources, PO Box 1230, Westwood, NJ 07675-9855, 800/223-2336.

National Commission for Employment Policy, 1522 K St. NW, Suite 300, Washington, DC 20005, 202/724-1545. The commission has published *Employer Strategies for a Changing Labor Force: A Primer on Innovative Programs and Policies* that contains a detailed chapter on workplace literacy programs as well as chapters on recruitment strategies and dependent-care benefits.

Project Literacy U.S. (PLUS), National PLUS Outreach Office, WQED, 4802 Fifth Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15213, 412/887-7079. A national campaign directed by ABC and PBS, with task forces throughout Florida.

U.S. Department of Education, Division of Adult Education and Literacy, 400 Maryland Ave. SW, Washington, DC 20202-7240, 202/732-2270. The division publishes *Update*, a newsletter on adult literacy and learning plus other publications, including *Adult Literacy: Programs that Work* and *The Bottom Line: Basic Skills in the Workplace* ($3.25, Stock # 029-000-00424-2 from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402). Also, **Education Partnerships for Workplace Literacy,** Division of Continuing Education, Room 522, Reporters Bldg., Washington, DC 20202, 202/732-2390, provides demonstration grants to exemplary education partnerships (business, labor, private industry councils) that teach literacy skills needed in the workplace.

U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Work-Based Learning, 200 Constitution Ave. NW, Room N4649, Washington, DC 20210, 202/535-0540. The office is a central resource center for information about the department's workforce literacy efforts. To order a copy of *What Work Requires of Schools: A SCANS Report for America 2000*, call 800/788-SKILL. The department also sponsored the landmark *Workforce 2000: Work and Workers for the 21st Century* study done by the Hudson Institute. Copies are $4.50 from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402. **VISTA Literacy Corps,** Action, 806 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20525, 202/634-9445. The program assigns federally paid VISTA volunteers to develop and strengthen local and state public and nonprofit literacy programs.

Acknowledgments

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Other helpful sources included the AFL-CIO, the American Council on Education, the Conference Board, the Florida Department of Education, the Florida Department of Labor and Employment Security, the Hudson Institute, the National Alliance of Business, the National Center on Education and the Economy, the National Commission for Employment Policy, the National Governors' Association, the Office of Technology Assessment, the Southern Regional Literacy Commission, the U.S. Department of Education, and the U.S. Department of Labor and its Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS).

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